

ART. XXX.—*Labour among Primitive Peoples: showing the Development of the Obstetric Science of to-day, from the Natural and Instinctive Customs of all Races, civilized and savage, past and present.* By GEO. J. ENGELMANN, A.M., M.D., Professor of Obstetrics in the Post-Graduate School of the Missouri Medical College, Master in Obstetrics of the University of Vienna, etc. Second edition, revised, enlarged, and re-arranged. Fifty-nine illustrations. St. Louis: J. H. Chambers & Co., 1883.

THIS book is the development of a paper read by Dr. Engelmann before the American Gynæcological Society in 1880. The first edition was issued in 1882, and we are glad it met with such professional appreciation that so short a time has passed before a new edition was required. The author states in the preface that "it is owing to the interest and energy of the publishers" he is enabled to "present this second, thoroughly revised, completely changed, and very much enlarged edition to the profession."

The work is divided into five chapters, as follows: Pregnancy, Parturition and Childbed, Posture in Labour, The Third Stage of Labour, Massage and Expression, and, finally, Characteristic Labour Scenes among the Yellow, Black, and Red Races.

It is needless to tell our readers that this is one of the most interesting contributions to professional literature; it contains many curious facts derived from various parts of the world, and from various ages. But we cannot share with the learned and industrious author in his belief that "a vast and important fund of knowledge may be derived from a study of the various positions occupied by women of different peoples in their labours." Is, for example, the instinct which is supposed by Dr. E. to govern the position of a woman in labour, among savage people, wise which makes the parturient stand, or be suspended partially, or entirely? Is it not better to follow "modern obstetric fashion?" Most serious accidents have occurred when civilized women have been accidentally delivered in the erect posture, such as the child being killed by falling on the floor, and the mother having her uterus inverted.

Again, can we be quite sure that certain positions are taken by women in labor from instinct, or from education, wise or foolish, as the case may be? So, too, it may be that a parturient takes an instinctive position not for the purpose of accelerating labour, but for the relief of suffering. For example, a woman in the first stage of labour, during a "pain" instinctively inclines her body forward, probably just as any one, male as well as female, with any severe abdominal pain also makes a similar inclination to relieve sensitive parts from pressure by abdominal muscles. Another explanation that has been given of this forward inclination of the parturient is that thus she withdraws the presenting part of the foetus from pressure upon the lower portion of the womb. Now this movement, though instinctive, has nothing to do with assisting labour.

We do not believe Dr. Engelmann himself, with all his admiration for the wisdom of instinct, ever advises St. Louis ladies to go through the martyrdom of maternity in the erect position, whether simply standing, or swinging on the limb of a tree; for he distinctly states that "the semi-recumbent position is the most serviceable, and should be adopted as the obstetric position in all ordinary labour cases; it is preferable to the

kneeling or squatting." But if instinct is to be the guide, should we reject the other positions which so many savage women have taken in labour? It puzzles one to explain why instinct, if wise and truthful, tells so many different stories upon the subject—one woman delivered standing, another suspended to the branch of a tree, another on all fours, another squatting, another kneeling, another sitting with her body inclined forward, while still another has her body inclined backward, and so on through other positions. Which of all these statements on the part of Dame Instinct is true?

Nor are we quite willing to accept the rule which Dr. Engelmann has given as to selecting the semi-recumbent position in all ordinary labour cases. Certainly the fact that perineal tears are more frequent when the patient is on her back than when she is on her side, presents a very strong argument in favor of the side position, at least during the close of the second stage of labour.

But we must end our remarks in regard to this very interesting book. The author has done his work so well that future writers upon the subject must simply repeat the results of his large, patient, and valuable researches. We are glad to know that this volume has had the high compliment of translation into German.

T. P.

ART. XXXI.—*Health Reports.*

1. *Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Health of the State of New Jersey.* Woodbury, 1883. Pamph. pp. 391.
2. *First, Second, and Third Annual Reports of the Secretary of the State Board of Health of West Virginia for the years 1881, 1882, and 1883.* Wheeling, 1883. Pamph. pp. 305.

THE *New Jersey* Report gives as usual abundant evidence of the active exertions of the board under the stimulating influence of its untiring secretary, Dr. Ezra M. Hunt, late President of the American Public Health Association, to "render life more vigorous, and death more remote" for every inhabitant of the State. The total number of deaths for the year ending July 1, 1883, was 23,310, being a considerable reduction from the previous year, whilst the marriages and births have both increased. The relation of the State to local boards has proved mutually advantageous, and it appears that both the public and local health authorities are realizing the great value of those improvements which secure good water, proper disposal for decomposable substances, good houses, cleanly habits, and chances of employment deprived of all avoidable insanitary conditions. Several cities and townships have, it is stated, entirely modified their health administration, and others are so agitating the need as to be sure eventually to bring about desired results. It is gratifying to find that the sanitary officials, in their efforts to abate nuisances, have received just and timely aid from the legal tribunals of the State, notably in the Bound Brook mill-dam case, and in regard to the enforcement of the Milk-adulteration Act, for which all the babies of New Jersey at any rate should rise up and call the judges blessed. Much good work has been